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UNCLAS HANOI 002788

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

STATE FOR EAP A/S KELLY AND EAP/BCLTV

ALSO FOR INR/B

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PINR](#) [VM](#) [FR](#)

SUBJECT: MFA RESHUFFLES -- GOOD NEWS FOR U.S.

1. (U) This is an action request -- see para 6.

2. (SBU) Deputy Foreign Minister Le Van Bang informed Ambassador October 31 that his area of responsibility had been shifted from the Northeast Asia portfolio to the Americas, effective that day. He noted that the news would not be announced until early November and asked that we not share publicly. He will retain oversight for International Organization affairs (including human rights), budget and finance, and international NGOs.

3. (SBU) Senior Deputy Foreign Minister Nguyen Dinh Bin will be named Ambassador to France. Comment: Bin has been an often difficult interlocutor, usually prickly and aggressive. While he understands English, he prefers to respond in Vietnamese. End comment

4. (SBU) Bang indicated that he would be "at least" #3 in the MFA hierarchy. This likely means that Deputy Le Cong Phung, who will retain responsibility for European affairs and may assume duties for Middle East and African affairs, will be the senior Deputy. Bang confirmed that the number of Deputy Ministers will go down to only three (from the current five), although there are also two Assistant Foreign Ministers (one of whom is simultaneously Director General of the Americas Department).

5. (SBU) Deputy Foreign Minister Nguyen Phu Binh will take over the Northeast Asia account. Bang noted that Binh speaks fluent Korean, having both studied in North Korea and served as the SRV Ambassador in Seoul.

6. (U) Comment and action request: Bang's oversight of American affairs is good news for the U.S.-Vietnam bilateral relationship, to which Bang has devoted most of his professional career. He remains an enthusiastic promoter of better ties, and will be seeking to establish a new, more formal "framework" for comprehensive relations, including a "roadmap" for more regular activities and high-level visits. (Vietnam has signed similar framework agreements with the PRC and other major partners.) Embassy recommends the following congratulatory message from A/S Kelly to DFM Bang: Begin text

H.E. Mr. Le Van Bang  
Deputy Foreign Minister  
Socialist Republic of Vietnam:

Dear Mr. Minister,

I was delighted to hear that you will assume responsibility for the Americas portfolio in your Ministry. Your personal contributions to the steady improvement of U.S.-Vietnam ties, including both the formal establishment of diplomatic relations and your successful tour in Washington, D.C. as the first SRV Ambassador, have been notable and much appreciated.

I wish you the very best of luck in your new and still challenging responsibilities, and look forward to working closely with you to promote even better ties between our two countries, which is clearly in the interests of both our nations and peoples. I hope to welcome you soon to Washington, perhaps first during the upcoming visit of Deputy Prime Minister Vu Khoan.

Best regards.  
Sincerely,  
James A. Kelly  
end text  
BURGHARDT